

Opening Statement
Chairman Mark Souder

“DOD Counternarcotics: What Is Congress Getting
For Its Money?”

Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy
and Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform

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Good Morning. Because of the consistent jurisdictional focus in the Subcommittee on the President's National Drug Control Strategy, we pay very close attention to demand reduction initiatives, treatment initiatives, and drug supply and interdiction initiatives. Our oversight activities continually evaluate departmental authorizations, appropriations, and the efficiency and effectiveness of departmental efforts. The President's budget request, now before Congress, asks for approximately \$12.6 Billion dollars for the Strategy in 2005. The Department of Defense is to be appropriated almost fifteen percent of that sum.

The most compelling reason for my tenacity in this regard is the loss of life due to drugs in my District and all over this great nation. This year more than 21,000 Americans died of drug-related causes. We have never lost this many Americans annually to a single military or terrorist campaign. This staggering statistic is significant when placed in perspective: we have lost in excess of 600 brave Americans in Iraq since Operation Enduring Freedom began, which is about 2.9 percent of those lost to drugs over the

same period of time. We've lost more Americans to drugs than were killed in any single terrorist act to date. It is vitally important that we maintain vigorous efforts to control the sources of supply for narcotics and to interdict them before reaching the United States.

The Department of Defense has been appropriately authorized to conduct counternarcotics missions and was designated the lead department for many counternarcotics command, control, detection, monitoring, and training responsibilities in the 1989 DoD authorization bill, among other authorities. The Department has also been appropriately funded in fiscal year 2003 with a final budget authority for DoD counternarcotics activities of \$905.9 million. Fiscal year 2004 saw an increase in the counternarcotics budget to \$908.6 million and the fiscal year 2005 budget request is \$852.7 million. In addition, the Department requested and received \$73 million in supplemental funds for counternarcotics activities in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. It remains unclear to me how that appropriation has reduced the growth, processing, transshipment, and availability or street price of drugs from Central Asia.

A significant problem is the allocation of national resources to counternarcotics missions. Many of our most significant interdiction assets are operated by the Department of Defense. The Subcommittee staff received briefings at the Joint Interagency Task Force - South in Key West and at the U.S. Southern Command that suggest that the redirection of National resources away from drug control missions in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility to combat missions in the CENTCOM area of

responsibility have had dire negative impacts on drug interdiction in the Western Hemisphere. Some detection and interception programs have only a miniscule proportion of the amount of resources that government experts have deemed necessary for an adequate detection and interdiction program. This allocation of resources must be addressed vigorously and quickly by the Department of Defense.

Our witnesses today have some of the significant responsibilities for operational matters relating to narcotics supply reduction and interdiction, and I would appreciate very much the opportunity to have them here to survey the status, effectiveness, and spending priorities of these critical programs. For example, many of these responsibilities are carried out in the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility and specifically in the Andean Region. For several years, U.S. Southern Command personnel have been training Colombian military pilots and the Counternarcotics Brigade. The expanded authorities in Colombia allow personnel and equipment to be employed against both narcotics and terrorist threats. This year, the Department has requested an increase in the personnel limitation in Colombia, to facilitate greater training opportunities, among other things. It is clear that we are seeing real and tangible successes in Colombia, and I very much appreciate the Command's efforts. To support the counternarcotics efforts of President Uribe and Vice President Santos, with whom I've had the opportunity to spend a significant amount of time. The Attorney General of the United States has indicted members of both the FARC and the AUC for using drug proceeds to support their terrorism.

We will consider the Department's response to rapidly emerging new threats, such as the connection between terrorists and drug trafficking organizations. The resumption of large-scale heroin production in Afghanistan breeds instability and directly funds terrorist groups. The President has announced to the world that terrorists and sponsoring nations are our enemies. What efforts are underway to destroy the funding source of these enemies? The eradication of opium poppy, the interdiction of precursor chemicals traffickers, and the destruction of stockpiled drugs and processing facilities in Afghanistan directly carry out the intent of the Commander in Chief's National Drug Control Strategy.

Today we will try to determine more precisely what has been the focus of effort and the effect of the Department's counternarcotics program worldwide and what steps can be taken to ensure the adequacy of interdiction resources, and determine whether resources will ever return to previous levels. Clearly, our plate this morning is very full, and I welcome our witnesses. From the Department of Defense, we have Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, Mr. Thomas O'Connell, who recently testified before the Subcommittee on the Andean Counterdrug Initiative. Our second panel is comprised of flag officers making their first appearances here, representing the Combatant Commands where most of our supply reduction work is authorized and appropriated. Brigadier General Benjamin Mixon will speak for the U.S. Southern Command and Rear Admiral David Kunkel will speak for the U.S. Pacific Command. Unfortunately, our invited witness from the U.S. Central Command was not available to testify, so we look forward to receiving his testimony separately in the future.

There is certainly no lack of important issues for discussion and I expect today's hearing to cover a wide range of pressing questions. Welcome to all of you, and I look forward to the discussion.